

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035971
Inspection date	02/11/2011
Inspector	Sonya Robinson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	14/12/2010
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides short-term breaks and some respite care for children and young people, from the ages of seven years to 17 years, with physical and learning disabilities.

The home is owned and run by local authority.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

This short break and respite service provides a safe and supportive environment where young people are able to develop at their own pace the skills, competence and confidence they need for adult life. Young people are protected from harm, with mechanisms in place to keep them safe. Parents and their children are central through discussion and decision making about their care and support, how they spend their spare time, their future plans, and their views are respected.

Planning for young people's stay is comprehensive and thorough. Young people's needs are clearly identified and support plans are effectively put into practice. Staff work in a very coordinated and organised way with young people, their family and people from other agencies involved in young people's lives to ensure that young people continue to get the right support.

Evidence supports a strong commitment to delivering equality and diversity in practice. Staff recognise young people as individuals with different needs, abilities, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs. Staff have a good knowledge of the young people they are working with, ensuring their needs are consistently met. Staff value the rights of individuals to be different and promote respect and dignity.

There are three requirements and two recommendations highlighted within this report. These relate to notifying Ofsted of any significant events that may occur, revision of the behaviour management policy and updating the Statement of Purpose and the young person's guide. Good practice issues highlighted relate to general maintenance issues regarding finishing the refurbishment and further improvement in safeguarding procedures for staff.

Areas for improvementStatutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	keep under review and where appropriate revise the behaviour management policy and notify HMCI of any revision within 28 days (Regulation 17B)	31/12/2011
5 (2001)	review and revise where necessary the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide (Regulation 5)	31/12/2011
30 (2001)	ensure a system is in place to notify without delay all authorities listed in schedule 5 of significant events. (Regulation 30 (1))	31/12/2011

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the children's home has a designated person, who is a senior manager, responsible for managing allegations. (NMS 20.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Young people are given effective opportunities, reflective of age and understanding, to make comments about their care. This is achieved through summaries that report on the progress of the young person's stay. These are then collated into meaningful feedback as described by placing social workers.

Young people as a group are regularly consulted about events in the home. The service has undergone a major refurbishment since the last inspection and there are photographs of young people contributing to picking out décor, pictures, furniture and to the running of the home. Young people's meetings have covered a broad range of topics, including discussing activities, outings and expressing feelings. Strong recognition is given to young people's identity and diverse needs. For example, young people have recently enjoyed a 'Jewish breakfast' which has increased the items of food eaten for a child with autism. The home has also celebrated the 'British food' fortnight. This extends to demonstrating how cultural, religious and racial needs are met on a day-to-day basis.

The home's promotion of young people's health and well-being is seen as a crucial aspect of care to improve outcomes. This includes having strong partnerships with parents. Feedback from parents to Ofsted clearly demonstrates that this is a highly-valued service. Examples include, 'they are always available for advice and support', 'lines of communication are always open', 'they help my child with independence and life skills', 'staff are fantastic couldn't ask for a better place', 'lovely caring staff, very good food and care, no issues', and 'the home has made an immense difference to our family.' The placement plan incorporates informative, child-centred plans that provide a detailed evaluation of young people's physical, emotional and health needs. The provision and preparation of meals is good to ensure young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that aid growth and development. Through this collaborative working and the practices of care used in the home, the well-being of young people is enhanced.

Young people's educational needs are identified in written plans and there are clear arrangements for meeting their needs. Staff have a high regard for education and ensure that, during stays, young people attend school or college daily. Staff make sure that young people have appropriate equipment and that they are fully prepared for the school day. Young people's progress from commencing the service to date is very clearly documented. Some young people have made very good progress, for example, winning local authority achievement awards, which has led to confidence building and further development in young people's self-esteem and understanding.

All admissions to this short stay service are managed sensitively and consideration is always given to the needs of all other children before decisions to admit a new child is made. This is a real strength of this service as young people's enjoyment and development can be measured along with their peers during their stay. For example, young people of similar ages, abilities and interests are often matched to stay at the same times. Parents are encouraged to visit the service during the admission process and contact throughout the young person's stay is often maintained, as appropriate.

Young people enjoy warm relationships with staff, and staff are motivated and interested in young people. Staff enjoy spending time with young people and are proud of young people's achievements. They have clear professional and personal boundaries with young people. This demonstrates that the home is committed to providing an inclusive service that values individuals and enhances the positive outcomes for young people during their stay.

Young people who move on to adult life have a wide range of physical, emotional and learning needs, and some also require specific medical and mobility support. The home works very closely with parents and other helping agencies to aid this smooth transition, to identify the holistic care of young people with additional needs.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

Young people are encouraged to make everyday decisions around food and how they spend their time. There are some good examples of how staff use non-verbal communication techniques enabling young people to make decisions and play a more active role in the review of their placement plans. This is reflected, for example, through photographs and arts and crafts. Staff speak positively about the young people, and clearly understand their role in maintaining suitable boundaries and providing caring relationship between themselves and young people.

The home utilises a range of resources to promote consultation with young people. The staff are able to recognise individual methods of communication and ensure that all young people have meaningful opportunities, which enable them to effectively contribute to the delivery of their care.

The home has an accessible complaints procedure. Young people have access to this, with staff or parental support if necessary. All complaints are given the highest regard and they are acted upon. Staff speak and interact with young people in a positive and caring manner during their stays. This ensures that the young people are happy and that they have opportunities to make their feelings known.

Staff plan for young people's care and short stay very well. Young people's placement plans provide a detailed picture of young people's personal needs and how the home will meet these. The objective of young people's time at the home is clearly outlined to show what young people and staff are working towards. Young people's records are comprehensive and show how all their needs and achievements are being met on a day-to-day basis and what progress they are making.

The home has effective systems for the safe handling and storage of medicines. Staff are trained in meeting some clinical needs of individual young people, such as tube feeding. Staff adhere to procedures within the home to ensure young people are provided with all medicines that they require.

Staff support and encourage young people to take part in leisure activities. Young people can pursue particular interests, such as computer games or outdoor games, if they wish. Young people have easy access to books, art materials, board games and other educational resources. All young people are able to continue with their educational placements while staying at the home. Staff maintain positive relationships with education to ensure that young people benefit from good outcomes. Support is provided to ensure that young people have their disability and associated learning needs acknowledged and that they feel included and valued.

Since the last inspection the home has undergone a major refurbishment which for the most part is completed. There are still a couple of bedrooms to be completed and some painting to be finished; the oven in the kitchen is also planned to be replaced in the near future. The refurbishment has meant that all parts of the building to which young people have access, are adapted. Facilities within the home are designed and positioned to ensure that all young people enjoy the full benefits of an inclusive service. For example, a downstairs toilet and shower room has been created for young people's ease of access and this has also helped to promote

dignity and privacy of the young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Young people's individual care plans clearly identify any risks they may face and outline effective strategies to ensure their welfare is promoted and protected. Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are well trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. However, the home is yet to appoint a designated person to whom staff can go to about safeguarding concerns. This would provide further safeguards for young people living in the home.

Staff ensure plans for young people's safety are consistently put into practice and fully address young people's specific needs. They have good knowledge of young people's particular vulnerabilities relating to level of understanding and disability. This enables them to ensure young people are safe at the home and in the community. The level of supervision and support young people receive ensures that they do not go missing and are free from bullying and harassment. Staff balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. As a result, young people are able to enjoy some of the same social experiences as other young people their age, for example, going to the theatre and taking part in activities they enjoy.

There is minimal use of physical restraint and, when used, it is kept to the briefest time possible. Sanctions are also rarely used due to the needs and understanding of the young people who access this service. The behaviour management policy is in the process of being reviewed to provide clarity for staff and to take into account recent statutory guidance and regulations. Upon completion there is a requirement for this to be sent to Ofsted in accordance with the regulations regarding children's homes. The manager does monitor all incidents in order to review practice and change behaviour management strategies, if required.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is good to make sure young people are protected. Also, there are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised which protects young people.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **good**.

The home is managed effectively by an experienced management team. The home has a business plan in place which includes an improvement agenda. This demonstrates that they want to continue to improve their service and the outcomes for young people in their care. Staff say that they are supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. They confirm that when they need support and guidance the manager is available and helpful. Staff are well supported on a daily basis and they are consistently receiving one-to-one supervision on a regular basis.

At the last inspection undertaken in December 2010, five recommendations were raised. These were regarding obtaining young people's views, behaviour management, risk assessments, household maintenance and staff training. Since the last inspection, young people's view have been obtained within a questionnaire devised by the home and there is plenty of photographic evidence of young people being consulted on daily issues and through recent building works. The behaviour management policy has been drafted, however, the introduction of new statutory guidance and legislation is not currently being reflected. Young people's risk assessments have been reviewed and updated and the home has also undergone some significant building works as part of a major refurbishment which is now almost complete. Staff have also enjoyed a variety of training since the last inspection, including cerebral palsy and epilepsy training, first aid and pump gastronomy feeds.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose that sets out the aims of the home and how it will operate. Young people receive a children's guide to the home. However, both of these documents do not contain all relevant information. For example the children's guide does not contain details of the Children's Rights Officer at Ofsted or about independent reviewing officers and social workers.

The management of this service demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering good childcare practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of the young people they look after. Social workers feedback has been that, 'key workers are very knowledgeable about their key child, young people are safe', 'we have overwhelmingly positive feedback from parents, when there are issues, the home is very responsive.'

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are caring. The skills within the staff team match well the young people's needs. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people. This includes the support they need for activities and personal care.

The home has systems in place to review the quality of care provided. The manager consistently monitors the running of the home every month. She identifies areas for improvement and takes action to ensure that the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare. A representative and councillor from the local authority visit the home every month to monitor how well young people are being cared for. The home has a good relationship with the local community and neighbours.

Young people's records are organised and contain up-to-date information about them, including relevant documents from placing authorities. There are systems in place to notify Ofsted of any significant issues that may occur within the home or with regards to the young person placed. However, Ofsted were not informed of a particular issue, although all other parties were informed and appropriate action was taken to ensure the young person's safety. This has not impacted on the well-being of young people placed.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.